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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7606  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000929

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA, NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ASEC](#)

SUBJECT: GAZA: FRIDAY MORE CALM, BUT SOME FIGHTING CONTINUES

REF: A. JERUSALEM 905

- [1](#)B. JERUSALEM 899
- [1](#)C. JERUSALEM 891
- [1](#)D. JERUSALEM 882

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Despite multi-faction agreement to enforce a ceasefire, violence continued (albeit at a reduced level) late May 17 through 1600 on May 18, with two Palestinians killed and at least 18 injured in factional clashes. 21 Qassam rockets landed in Israel since the last update (Ref A), causing three light injuries in Sderot and damaging several buildings. Israeli retaliatory airstrikes and shelling have killed at least 8 more Palestinians, of whom 5 were members claimed by Hamas and, according to Palestinian security contacts, 3 were uninvolved in factional fighting or rocket activity, and injuring at least 23. End summary.

#### New Ceasefire Efforts Underway

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[1](#)2. (SBU) The National and Islamic Forces (NIF) (an umbrella committee for coordination between Palestinian factions) announced May 17 that they will send field teams across Gaza City and central Gaza to verify and enforce ceasefire compliance. NIF committee member Isam Abu Duqqa told Palestinian television that an agreement to remove gunmen from Gaza's streets and rooftops is being implemented and they are negotiating to withdraw all gunmen, dismantle roadblocks, stop media incitement, and release kidnapped activists.

#### Violence Reduced May 18, But Shooting Continues

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[1](#)3. (SBU) Late May 17, Hamas militants killed an National Security Forces (NSF) soldier and injured two others in an RPG/small arms assault on an NSF checkpoint in Gaza City. Hamas fighters shot and injured two General Intelligence (Mukhabarat) guards near the Mukhabarat HQ in Gaza City. Unknown gunmen shot and injured Fatah activist Ahmad al-Hasan in Gaza City. In Khan Yunis, "Executive Force" members seized the police car and weapons of Khan Yunis police chief Farid al-Akhras and beat his bodyguard. In Rafah, unknown gunmen shot and injured a sports club coach, motive unknown.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Early May 18, Hamas military-wing and NSF fighters exchanged heavy fire around al-Rimal neighborhood and at the NSF HQ in Gaza City (no injuries reported), while Preventive Security (PSO) guards and Fatah gunmen fought Hamas militants near the Islamic University and al-Nada Tower. (Note: Fatah officials publicly claimed March 18 that Hamas gunmen are stockpiling weapons and ammunition inside Islamic University. End note). Palestinian security forces (PASF) contacts

report Hamas gunmen attacked two Fatah members leaving prayers at Anwar Aziz mosque in Jabaliya, and a bystander (a young boy) was injured in the ensuing gunbattle. A fisherman, Samir al-Mu'di, was shot and killed at 1515 local in an exchange of fire between Fatah and Hamas gunmen on a beach near Gaza City. There are continuing reports of both Fatah and Hamas activists being kidnapped.

15. (SBU) Fatah and Hamas leaders traded public accusations of aggression and incitement May 17-18. President's Office officials told Palestinian press late May 17 that President Abbas has canceled his planned trip to Gaza in response to specific threats against his convoy and the discovery of explosive in a drainage tunnel under Salah al-Din Road. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum denied any attempt to assassinate Abbas. He accused Fatah and PASF of fabricating threats to incite public opinion against Hamas and prevent Abbas from taking steps to reduce fighting. Barhum also condemned Fatah Deputy PM Azzam al-Ahmad's statement that the "Executive Force" is illegal and should be disbanded. Fatah Central Committee member Faruq al-Qadumi commented to Arabic-language press from Tunis late May 17 that hardline Hamas PLC member Mahmud al-Zahar is frustrating ceasefire efforts in contrast to PM Ismayil Haniyah and Damascus-based Hamas leader Khalid Misha'al whom he called "true partners for Fatah."

#### Qassam Barrage Continues

16. (SBU) 21 Qassam rockets struck Israel since the last update (Ref A). Hamas claimed 4 additional launches, but there are no reported impacts in Israel. Rockets struck Sderot and neighboring Kibbutzim, Be'eri, Nahal Oz and south of Ashkelon, causing three light injuries in Sderot and

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damaging a house, gas station, factory and synagogue there, and starting a fire in a Negev agricultural area.

17. (SBU) Palestinian security contacts report at least 8 Palestinians were killed in multiple Israeli strikes throughout Gaza since the last update (Ref A). Hamas reports five dead and, Rafah municipality reports an Israeli missile destroyed a city garbage truck, killing two brothers, and injuring at least 23. Contacts say 10 of the 23 were bystanders uninvolved in the fighting. Contacts also report Israeli shelling of Shujaya (Gaza City area) but no casualties.

#### Comment

18. (SBU) Violence decreased compared to May 15-17, but there is no indication that inter-factional ceasefire efforts are succeeding, and funerals for those killed in previous days' clashes are generating anger and incitement, which could also have an escalatory effect.

WALLES